

MEMBER FORUM – CHARTING A PATH FORWARD: IDENTIFYING FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

NOV 2, 2017



Focus on Circular Economy

The circular economy concept has been identified as potentially important to the work of the Council but it is not well understood. Furthermore, while examples of how it is being applied internationally exist, few Canadian examples are documented. Within this context, the Circular Economy Working Group exists to advance the circular economy in Canada with three core objectives:

- To foster collaborative learning, action and awareness of the advantages of a circular economy to building a Zero Waste culture across leading organizations in Canada.
- To identify, communicate and, where possible, develop the establishment of circular economic opportunities and best practices as they apply to waste prevention and reduction.
- To monitor and align with international practice, and encourage an enabling environment that will facilitate the adoption of circular economic approaches within Canada.

Progress on delivering on these three objectives is being achieved by:

- **Developing resources and tools to help organizations on their circular economy journey.** The Working Group has completed a series of case studies and a business toolkit that are intended to de-mystify the concept and help organizations adopt circular economy approaches. The Working Group is now researching and will develop a series of snapshots that will profile additional best practices by businesses and other organizations in Canada who are leading in the implementation of circular economy principles and business models within the Zero Waste context. These snapshots will expand the range of tools on the Council website that make the circular economy concept more tangible, while inspiring action.
- **Knowledge sharing while developing a network of Canadian leaders and practitioners.** The Working Group actively promotes the benefits of a circular economy approach at events across the country – hosting webinars and workshops (often in partnership with other organizations) and participating in conferences and projects -- to engage new audiences as well as build a network of leaders and practitioners who are committed to advancing the circular economy in Canada. Examples are: Circular Economy Open Source Days, a Solutions Lab in collaboration with the World Business Council, Americana 2017, SFU MBA Student Project (acting as the client for the class project) and facilitating the active participation of three Council members (i.e., Metro Vancouver, City of Toronto, and City of Vancouver) in the Ellen MacArthur Foundation Circular Cities Platform.

Looking Ahead

The Working Group sees a need to better demonstrate the benefits for Canadian businesses and governments for engaging in the transition to a circular economy. Within the context of the Council's waste prevention lens, the Working Group will continue to identify the tools, resources and support that would aid in this transition.

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Focus on Construction, Renovation and Demolition

Construction, Renovation and Demolition is a new focus area for the Council. The Management Board approved the creation of the Working Group at its first meeting in 2017. Waste from the construction sector represents a sizeable portion of the waste stream and the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) has identified as a priority focus area for its work.

The CRD Working Group has decided that their initial focus will be on procurement policies, specifically in the local government sector. The rationale for this decision is that metropolitan areas in Canada build, update and maintain large public utility infrastructure, generally are responsible for managing solid waste systems and at the same time have sustainability ambitions. This means they are in a unique position to be interested in examining how construction waste could be reduced. The Working Group has recognized this opportunity and will be developing a framework analysis using procurement as a collaborative platform for waste prevention.

Objectives

- Reduce the amount of CRD waste being landfilled by removing the roadblocks for the use of recycled and reused materials, promoting lifecycle costing, improving CRD diversion to the highest possible use
- Promote the use of procurement to align municipalities' sustainability and engineering objectives in their construction and maintenance programs
- Recommend clear, quantifiable measures and metrics to be used to drive sustainability in the procurement process

Workplan

- Create an analytical framework that will leverage existing work on waste prevention (including the waste hierarchy, circular design principles, definition of terms, accessing data flows) to assess potential pilots that will deliver working group objectives through the procurement process.
- Potential pilots include:
 1. Determining metrics to drive the use of wood
 2. Optimizing the value of crushed concrete, RAP and shingles
 3. Creating a framework to use BIM (Building Information Modelling) to measure life cycle value

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Focus on Food

Since the Council's inception, organic waste was identified as a significant waste issue due to amount of it in the waste stream. The Working Group decided to focus on food waste in order to leverage the work underway by Metro Vancouver on organics bans and its Love Food Hate Waste campaign as well as the work done by Food Banks Canada. The Food Working Group then developed objectives and a work plan dependent on collaboration; including:

- **Building upon projects led by other agencies.** Food Banks Canada had led an initiative proposing a tax incentive to encourage businesses with surplus food to donate it to charities who recover and redistribute food but was unable to move it ahead. The Food Working Group seeing an opportunity to utilize the research and experience of Food Banks Canada combined with its national network of food banks and business supporters adopted the initiative as its own and went on to conduct further research and developed a campaign to have municipalities push for support by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).

The business sector and charities receiving food donations each had important concerns related to a tax incentive. Businesses are worried about the potential liabilities of food donations while charities are concerned that they will be receiving food donations they can't use or don't want (for instance, bread in large quantities or packaged mints) and will therefore assume the disposal costs of unwanted food. BC's Centre for Disease Control has produced a document dealing with these two concerns that addressed the liability concern while developing guidelines for the donation of healthy foods. The National Food Donation Guidelines work underway by the Working Group is the result of engaging with the BC CDC who have allowed us to use, with copyright approval and proper references, portions of the provincial document. The national guidelines will include more customized information for particular provinces across the country.

- **Using champions to reach out to fellow champions.** The Food Working Group, through the efforts of Mike Layton and Bob Long, engaging their colleagues within local governments across Canada to support the tax incentive proposal and to call on FCM to adopt it as policy. This was ultimately successful.
- **Implementing the *National Food Waste Reduction Strategy*:** While the Strategy is a Strategic Initiative of the Council, the Food Working Group will continue to be essential in its implementation. In addition to the development of donation guidelines, the Working Group will be involved in advancing the value of organic bans by local governments and efforts to reduce confusion in date labelling of food. This work will involve specific research, sharing knowledge through webinars and workshops, and producing technical reports and general communications. And this work will be enhanced through collaboration – with members of the Council, other important stakeholders and organizations with similar objectives working in the US and Europe.

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Focus on Product Design and Packaging

The Product Design and Packaging (PDP) Working Group's mandate is *to advance initiatives with potential to influence product design and packaging, reducing and preventing waste generation at source.*

History of collaboration

Initially the Working Group focused on highlighting the value of designing waste out of the product and packaging lifecycle. This involved articulating a set of Design Principles for Waste Prevention and eventually the creation of the Design Portfolio.

- This work benefitted from the engagement of PAC and other business leaders and champions in waste prevention space. With PAC as a co-chair from 2014 to 2016, the Working Group was able to tap into their expertise, educational material and industry network.
- The development of the Design Principles involved the expertise of the members of the Working Group as well as other subject matter experts on addressing upstream sources of waste. While the Working Group members took responsibility for the "call for submissions" to the Design Portfolio, they relied on an external Design Portfolio Review committee to adjudicate the submissions. Creating a credible and respected review committee involved working with universities as well as industry certifiers and assessors.
- Through the organization of 10 webinars, the Working Group has created a network of academics and knowledgeable practitioners who have engaged Council members and the interested public in designing out waste.

Current work

- In 2017 the focus has been to create a framework for assessing enablers and policy barriers for zero waste products. This framework is being created using compostable packaging as a case study in order to develop recommendations of 'hot spots' and policy levers to enable the use truly compostable packaging.
- This work has involved information-gathering from primary and secondary sources and then analyzing these learnings by engaging experts and important stakeholders through webinars, interviews, and industry roundtables. This approach is designed to build the Council's credibility as a platform for progressive, solution-based dialogue and developing robust tools to affect design change.
- The Working Group is looking to expand the portfolio of White Papers and webinars to more fully meet the needs of Canadian stakeholders, including manufacturers, packagers and municipalities.
- The Design Portfolio is now a Strategic Initiative of the Council which will mean a broader outreach for potential products and packaging to be included in the Design Portfolio, but the Working Group will continue to have a role in identifying new members of the external Review Committee and improvements to the Design Principles.